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Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2367 (2017), in which the Secretary-General was requested to report every three months on progress made towards fulfilling the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The report covers key developments relating to Iraq and provides an update on the activities of the United Nations in Iraq since my previous report, dated 17 April (S/2018/359), and the briefing of my Special Representative for Iraq and Head of UNAMI to the Security Council on 30 May, until 21 June 2018.

II. Summary of key political developments

A. Political situation

2. On 12 May, Iraq concluded its first elections following the defeat of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and its fourth under the Constitution of 2005. On election day, 52,483 polling stations opened, including more than 3,000 dedicated to internally displaced persons. In addition, advanced special voting for the security forces took place on 10 May, while out-of-country voting was held on 10 and 11 May. Based on field reports gathered by the Independent High Electoral Commission, most polling stations opened on time, although delays were encountered at several owing to challenges with new technology for voter verification and vote counting and sorting. A total of 449 polling stations — 370 in Anbar Governorate and 79 in Kirkuk Governorate — did not open at all, while 262 polling stations in 12 governorates had to use alternative scanning devices because of a malfunction of the new technology.

3. Although, prior to the elections, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani had emphasized that participation in the elections was the right of every eligible citizen, he left it to every individual to choose whether to participate. As concerns over low voter turnout arose during election day, the Prime Minister, Haider Al Abadi, decided in the afternoon to order the lifting of movement restrictions that had been put in place for security reasons. In an additional effort to boost participation in the last hours of the polls, political and religious leaders publicly urged Iraqis to vote. After the elections, the Independent High Electoral Commission announced a turnout of 44.52 per cent (10.8 million of a total 24.3 million eligible voters). This figure includes 9 million

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votes cast on 12 May itself, 1 million on 10 May (special voting for security forces and prisoners) and 179,000 out-of-country votes.

4. Immediately following the closure of the polls, several senior officials and political party representatives issued public statements on the electoral process. The President, Fuad Masum, expressed satisfaction with the organization of the process and the professionalism of polling staff. The Prime Minister praised the performances of the Independent High Electoral Commission and the security forces during an "historic day", providing security and enabling voters to cast their votes. One of the three Vice-Presidents, Nouri al-Maliki, thanked the Commission for its efforts and the political parties for their adherence to the United Nations-facilitated Electoral Charter of Honour, in which parties had been called upon to conduct the elections freely, fairly, impartially, transparently and credibly. In addition, cleric Muqtada al-Sadr congratulated the Iraqi people on a "successful democratic day". However, one of the three Vice-Presidents, Ayad Allawi, and the Speaker, Salim al-Jubouri, expressed concerns about technical shortfalls, calling upon the relevant authorities to address them diligently and neutrally, while another of the three Vice-Presidents, Osama al-Nujaifi, commented on problems encountered with voting devices and reports of intimidation and fraud.

5. The international community congratulated Iraq on the parliamentary elections. Notably, on 13 May, the Secretary of State of the United States of America, Mike Pompeo, congratulated the Iraqi people and pledged that the United States would stand ready to partner with the new Government to "continue to build a long-term relationship of cooperation and friendship ... to contribute to stability in the region and growing peace and prosperity in Iraq". On the same day, the Minister of State for the Middle East of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Alistair Burt, congratulated the Iraqi people, security forces and electoral authorities on the peaceful conduct of the elections. He stated that his Government looked forward to working with the new Government to "help deliver stability, security and prosperity for all Iraqis". On 14 May, the Islamic Republic of Iran congratulated the nation and Government of Iraq on holding successful elections in a secure environment, which it deemed a continuation of the country's victory against terrorism. It highlighted the intention of the Islamic Republic of Iran to further cement friendly relations between the two countries. On the same day, the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Ahmed Aboul Gheit, congratulated the Government and people of Iraq on holding successful parliamentary elections. On 15 May, the Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, congratulated the President and the Prime Minister of Iraq on the success of the elections.

6. On 19 May, the Independent High Electoral Commission released provisional election results. Of 329 parliamentary seats, the Sa'iron Alliance won 54 seats, the Conquest Alliance 47 seats, the Victory Alliance 42 seats, the State of Law coalition 25 seats, the Kurdistan Democratic Party 25 seats, the Wataniya coalition 21 seats, the National Wisdom Movement 19 seats, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan 18 seats and the Iraqi Decision Alliance 14 seats. Nine seats reserved for minority components were also allocated: five seats for Christians and one each for Yazidis, Shabaks, Sabean Mandaeans and Faili Kurds. In line with the constitutional requirement for female parliamentary representation, women candidates gained 84 seats, or 25.5 per cent of the total.

7. The release of the provisional results triggered the start of the formal complaint and adjudication process. The Independent High Electoral Commission received 1,438 complaints, including 27 pertaining to out-of-country voting and 139 on special voting. The Commission identified 33 complaints for full investigation, following which it decided to cancel the results from 768 polling stations in Anbar, Baghdad, Dahuk, Diyala, Erbil, Ninawa, Salah al-Din and Sulaymaniyah Governorates. An

appeal process against the Commission's decisions was concluded on 31 May. The Commission recorded 1,882 appeals, which were subsequently referred to the Electoral Judicial Panel, convened to adjudicate all appeals prior to the certification of the results by the Federal Supreme Court.

8. Turkmen- and Arab-led parties in Kirkuk Governorate contested the results there, alleging tampering with electronic vote-counting devices. Demonstrations and sit-ins were organized in and around the city of Kirkuk, notably surrounding the warehouse of the Independent High Electoral Commission, with hundreds of protestors demanding a recount. In Anbar Governorate, the Wataniya coalition and the Iraqi Decision Alliance demanded the annulment of conditional votes by internally displaced persons owing to alleged fraud. In the Kurdistan Region, on 13 May, the Movement for Change, the Kurdistan Islamic Union, the Kurdistan Islamic Group, the Kurdistan Communist Party, the New Generation Movement and the Alliance for Democracy and Justice jointly announced their rejection of the results and requested a repeat of the elections in the Kurdistan Region and the disputed areas, calling upon the Commission to investigate allegations of fraud.

9. Several political parties and candidates also challenged the election results directly through the Council of Representatives (the parliament), outside the legal complaint process. Following a request submitted by 81 parliamentarians, the Speaker convened a special session on 19 May to discuss alleged voting irregularities, which were attributed to the performance of the Independent High Electoral Commission staff and the malfunctioning of electronic devices. On 28 May, the Council adopted a decision calling for a manual recount of at least 10 per cent of all ballot boxes, noting that a full manual recount might be needed if significant deviation from the earlier results were found. The Council further called for the annulment of out-of-country voting results and the voting results of internally displaced persons in all governorates except Ninawa and Anbar Governorates.

10. The President met the Vice-Presidents on 29 May to discuss the decision of the Council of Representatives, subsequently issuing a statement in which all parties were called upon to follow the correct legal procedures with regard to complaints and appeals. The following day, he wrote to the Federal Supreme Court, asking it to issue an opinion on the constitutionality of the Council's decision. He subsequently issued a statement saying that the Council had no authority to demand a total or partial annulment of election results.

11. During an extraordinary meeting on 24 May, the Council of Ministers decided to form an investigative committee, chaired by the director of the Federal Board of Supreme Audit, to view all documents pertaining to the electoral process and submit recommendations to the Supreme Judicial Council, the Federal Supreme Court and the Electoral Judicial Panel. On 5 June, the Council of Ministers approved the report of the investigative committee, in which the committee recommended the manual sorting and recounting of votes in no less than 5 per cent of all polling stations in order to verify and cross-check results and the annulment of out-of-country voting results and some of the results from the polling stations for internally displaced persons in Anbar and Ninawa Governorates. The committee also recommended the prosecution of those involved in electoral violations. It further recommended that electronic counting and sorting devices not be used in future electoral processes and that the Independent High Electoral Commission Law be amended to ensure that future electoral processes would be overseen and managed by judges.

12. On 6 June, the Council of Representatives adopted an amendment to the Council of Representatives Elections Law, requiring the Independent High Electoral Commission to perform a full manual ballot recount under the supervision of judges appointed by the Supreme Judicial Council and in the presence of representatives of

political parties and temporarily suspending the work of the current Board of Commissioners. The amendment annuls the results of out-of-country voting and special (i.e. security forces and prisoners) voting in the Kurdistan Region, as well as the results of the voting by internally displaced persons in Anbar, Salah al-Din, Ninawa and Diyala Governorates.

13. On 10 June, the Supreme Judicial Council announced that nine judges had been nominated to replace the Board of Commissioners until the recount process was completed, together with the 19 judges who would replace the directors general of the governorate electoral offices. The work of the Electoral Judicial Panel relating to the appeals and complaints was suspended pending the completion of the recount process and the submission of new appeals.

14. On the same day, a fire damaged the warehouses of the Independent High Electoral Commission in the Rusafah area of Baghdad, which contained the electronic vote tabulation devices and voter verification kits used in the parliamentary elections. An investigative committee established by the Ministry of the Interior subsequently stated that the fire had been set deliberately, adding that four suspects had been arrested.

15. On 13 June, the Federal Supreme Court announced that it had decided not to rule on the five petitions requesting the suspension of the implementation of the amended law, stating that it could not issue a ruling before a final judgment had been made on the constitutionality of the amendment. On 21 June, the Court ruled on the constitutionality of the amended law, stating that it was in line with the Constitution, but that the provision to annul the results of out-of-country voting and special voting by the security forces in the Kurdistan Region, as well as the results of the conditional voting by prisoners and internally displaced persons in Anbar, Salah al-Din, Ninawa and Diyala Governorates, contradicted the Constitution and denied the rights of voters.

B. Relations between Baghdad and Erbil

16. Discussions between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government over outstanding issues, including oil and gas management and revenue, the disputed internal boundaries and the status of Kirkuk Governorate, paused during the campaigning and post-election periods. On 22 May, two separate delegations representing the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan arrived in Baghdad to discuss the formation of the next federal Government with other Iraqi leaders. The delegations held separate meetings with the Prime Minister, the Vice-President (Mr. al-Maliki) and party leaders Muqtada al-Sadr, Hadi al-Amiri and Ammar al-Hakim. The following day, 23 May, the President convened a meeting with both delegations to discuss government formation. Also on 22 May, the head of the New Generation Movement, Shaswar Abdulwahid Qadir, travelled to Baghdad where he met Muqtada al-Sadr to discuss a non-sectarian-based political agenda. The Chair of the Alliance for Democracy and Justice, Barham Salih, visited Baghdad on 5 June to meet the Prime Minister, the Vice-President (Mr. Allawi) and Mr. al-Amiri to discuss the government formation process.

17. Disagreements among the main parties in the Kurdistan Region became more pronounced following the announcement of the provisional election results. Following calls by the Movement for Change, the New Generation Movement, the Kurdistan Islamic Union, the Kurdistan Islamic Group, the Kurdistan Communist Party and the Alliance for Democracy and Justice for the annulment of results and a recount of the elections, on 16 May the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Nechirvan Barzani, publicly underlined the importance of Kurdish unity

in the post-election period, while also calling upon the Independent High Electoral Commission to investigate the allegations. The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan also called for a united Iraqi Kurdish position in the talks on the formation of the new federal Government.

18. On 7 May, in a letter to the Kurdistan Regional Parliament, the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government proposed that the regional parliamentary elections be held on 30 September. He subsequently clarified that the Kurdistan Democratic Party was ready to hold both parliamentary and presidential elections simultaneously, in line with the Kurdistan Region Presidency Law of 2005. The status of the Kurdistan Region presidential role has remained unclear following the resignation of the President of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Masoud Barzani, in October 2017. In the light of the concerns raised in the Kurdistan Region over the conduct of the elections to the Council of Representatives, the Kurdistan Independent High Electoral and Referendum Commission unanimously decided on 24 May to employ manual vote counting for the regional elections.

19. On 6 May, the Federal Supreme Court announced that it had, upon the request of the Kurdistan Regional Government, postponed its hearing on the legality of the independent oil exports by the Ministry of Natural Resources of the Kurdistan Region until 3 June. On 3 June, the Court announced that the hearing had been postponed.

C. Security

20. The Iraqi security forces have continued operations to clear ISIL remnants in Anbar Governorate and in the Tall Afar, Ba'aj and Sinjar districts of Ninawa Governorate. Nevertheless, asymmetric attacks have continued in Ninawa, Salah al-Din, Kirkuk, Anbar, Diyala and Baghdad Governorates, with ISIL targeting security forces and community leaders and also destroying farms and residential buildings. On 16 May, an ISIL suicide bomber detonated his explosive vest during a funeral in the Tarmiyah area of Baghdad Governorate, killing at least 7 civilians and wounding 25 others. According to an official report, the suicide bomber was a 9-year-old boy. The group also claimed responsibility for a suicide attack on 23 May in which 13 people were killed and 25 wounded in Saqlawiyah Park in Baghdad. On 8 June, an explosion in the city of Kirkuk reportedly killed 2 people and wounded 14 others.

21. Although ISIL released a statement on 22 April in which it expressed intent to disrupt the elections, the vote was conducted without major security incidents. After the closing of the polls, the Prime Minister and the Minister of the Interior, Qasim al-Araji, thanked the security forces for successfully securing the elections. A total of 55 security incidents were recorded on election day, 35 of which were perceived as having a direct connection to the election. These included the detonation of improvised explosive devices, attacks on polling stations by mortars or rockets, and small arms fire and clashes between the Iraqi security forces with unknown gunmen. Three civilians were killed and five civilians and three police officers were wounded in the incidents. The most significant incidents occurred in Diyala, Kirkuk and Salah al-Din Governorates, including the shelling of three polling stations by ISIL fighters in Abu Sayda in Diyala Governorate, wounding four civilians. Sporadic violence continued across the country after the elections. On 25 May, the Iraqi Communist Party office in the Karradah neighbourhood of Baghdad was attacked by unidentified assailants with two explosive devices, causing no casualties.

22. In the late evening of 6 June, an illegal ammunition storage facility in a densely populated neighbourhood of Sadr City in Baghdad exploded, with reports suggesting that 10 people had been killed and 19 wounded. The Prime Minister instructed the Ministry of the Interior to investigate the incident, recalling an executive order of

2017 instructing the security forces to confiscate weapons and ammunition stored by entities other than the security forces. Muqtada al-Sadr announced the formation of a separate committee to investigate the incident, which some had attributed to a Sadr-affiliated armed group.

23. The General Staff of the Armed Forces of Turkey announced that Turkey was continuing to conduct military operations on Kurdistan Workers' Party targets near the Iraqi-Turkish border in northern Iraq, including between 17 and 25 May and between 1 and 16 June. In May and June, Turkey also carried out limited ground operations in the Hakurk area in northern Erbil Governorate. On 3 June, representatives of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the Movement for Change and several other Kurdish political parties issued a statement protesting against the reported Turkish military operations in the Sidakan subdistrict of Erbil Governorate. They called upon the regional and federal Governments to "prevent further Turkish incursions". On 5 June, during his weekly press conference, the Prime Minister of Iraq confirmed that there was a modest Turkish military presence in northern Iraq and called upon Turkey to respect the sovereignty of Iraq. On 12 June, he confirmed that Iraq was closely following reports of Turkish military operations near the Qandil Mountains.

24. On 16 May, the Prime Minister confirmed that the Iraqi Air Force had carried out air strikes against ISIL targets in the Syrian Arab Republic, in coordination with the Government of that country. On 30 May, he announced that it had carried out another air strike against an ISIL target in the Syrian Arab Republic, emphasizing that his country's focus was on eliminating terrorism on the Iraqi-Syrian border and that it did not seek to interfere in the internal affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic.

25. On 18 June, the Popular Mobilization Commission stated that on 17 June an air strike against units of popular mobilization forces on the Syrian side of the border area with Iraq had resulted in numerous casualties. The Commission called upon the United States to clarify the incident. The same day, the Iraqi Joint Operations Command issued a statement in which it indicated that no members of the Iraqi security forces, including popular mobilization forces fighters, had been hit by any air strike. The Joint Operations Command noted that, while "units operating inside Syria" were not part of the Iraqi security forces, an investigation into which "entities" were responsible for the loss of lives of "Iraqi youth" would be opened. The international counter-ISIL coalition issued a statement that it was aware of reports of a strike near Albu Kamal that had killed and wounded several members of an unidentified force on 17 June and that there were no strikes by United States or coalition forces in that area at the time in question. The next day, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iraq issued a statement in which it rejected and condemned the air operations targeting forces present in "the areas of fighting ISIL", whether in Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic or elsewhere. The Ministry also underlined the importance of permanent and careful coordination between the international counter-ISIL coalition and the forces facing the terrorist organizations on the ground.

D. Regional and international developments

26. On 15 May, the Iraqi Council of Representatives approved a cooperation agreement between the Governments of Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. On 29 May, Muqtada al-Sadr travelled to Kuwait, where he was received by the Emir.

27. Following the elections, the Speaker met the United States Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, Brett McGurk, on 13 May to discuss political and security developments in Iraq and in the region. Mr. McGurk then travelled to Erbil to meet the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region. Key political

players also continued to meet representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey and other regional and international partners to discuss the elections and the formation of a new Government. On 17 May, the Prime Minister discussed in a telephone call with his Turkish counterpart, Binali Yıldırım, the deepening of bilateral ties between Iraq and Turkey and regional cooperation. The latter stressed the interest of Turkey in the stability of Iraq and the prosperity of its people.

28. On 3 June, the Minister of Water Resources, Muhsin al-Shammari, presented a report to the Council of Representatives recommending that the Government of Turkey be requested to delay the filling of the Ilısu dam on the Tigris River upstream of Iraq, which is suffering from severe water shortages. The previous day, the Vice-President (Mr. al-Maliki) had called upon the Government of Turkey to work together closely with Iraq on the issue. On 4 June, the Deputy Speaker, Humam Hamoudi, announced that the Council would request the Grand National Assembly of Turkey to postpone the filling of the reservoir by three months. On 6 June, the Prime Minister confirmed that dialogue with Turkey was ongoing, emphasizing that sufficient drinking water would remain available. On 7 June, the Ambassador of Turkey to Iraq, Fatih Yıldız, announced at a press conference in Baghdad that his Government had agreed to delay the filling of the dam until 1 July, in consideration of the needs of Iraq.

III. Update on the activities of the Mission and the United Nations country team

A. Political activities

29. My Special Representative for Iraq and Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance continued to engage with the Independent High Electoral Commission, representatives of political parties, government officials, parliamentarians, women's groups, civil society and religious and community leaders. On election day, my Special Representative and my Deputy Special Representatives for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance and for Humanitarian Affairs visited polling stations in Fallujah, Kirkuk and Erbil, including camps for internally displaced persons and other communities, to see how the electoral process unfolded. In my statement on 13 May, I congratulated the people of Iraq on the holding of parliamentary elections and saluted the tireless efforts of electoral officials, party agents and the security forces in making the elections largely peaceful and orderly.

30. Following the elections, several political leaders and political parties, notably in Erbil, Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyah Governorates, raised concerns with UNAMI over alleged electoral fraud. My Special Representative called upon the Independent High Electoral Commission to act expeditiously and seriously to address all complaints, including, if necessary, to consider conducting a partial manual recount in selected locations, notably in Kirkuk Governorate. He called for such measures to be taken in full transparency and to be witnessed by stakeholders, to strengthen confidence in the process. He urged the Commission to continue to safeguard the integrity of all electoral materials and equipment and to cooperate fully with and abide by the decisions of the Electoral Judicial Panel. Meanwhile, political actors and their supporters were urged to uphold the peace while electoral appeals were being adjudicated through the established legal channels.

31. On 11 and 12 June, respectively, my Special Representative and Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance met the President of the Supreme Judicial Council, Faiq Zaidan, and the nine judges appointed to perform the functions of the Independent High Electoral Commission to discuss preparations for

the recount as provided by the amendment to the Council of Representatives Elections Law of 6 June. All interlocutors emphasized the necessity of robust United Nations support in the recount process.

32. Within the framework of the United Nations-mediated Electoral Charter of Honour, my Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance continued to hold meetings with political parties and key political figures in Baghdad and Erbil, in the presence of representatives of the Independent High Electoral Commission and the electoral security unit of the Ministry of the Interior, to discuss concerns over the conduct of the elections. My Special Representative and Deputy Special Representative underlined the readiness of the United Nations to provide electoral advice and expertise in support of any activities and measures required to retain confidence in the electoral process.

33. As part of the post-election phase, my Special Representative and Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance also met numerous political leaders and actors, including women and minorities. They urged their interlocutors to prioritize inclusive, non-sectarian dialogue and to ensure the swift formation of a new, representative, national Government that reflected the will of the people, based on the principles of patriotism and citizenship with equal rights. They urged political leaders to ensure the full participation of women in the formation of the next Government, and their representation at the highest levels in political and decision-making structures. As part of UNAMI advocacy efforts to promote the effective participation and representation of women in political and decision-making processes, my Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance launched the #WhyNot (#Shakobeha) campaign with short films introducing successful women political activists, as well as men championing women's participation in political processes.

34. Although negotiations to promote the normalization of relations between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government were largely suspended over the electoral campaign period, UNAMI remained engaged with the main stakeholders. A renewed partnership of dialogue with the new Government will be required to address outstanding issues, including oil and gas management and revenue, the disputed internal boundaries and the status of Kirkuk Governorate. Meanwhile, UNAMI is carrying out a series of engagements with the younger generation in the Kurdistan Region to foster mutual understanding and to seek political views from communities at the grass-roots level.

B. Electoral assistance

35. In the run-up to the parliamentary elections, and at the request of the Independent High Electoral Commission, UNAMI and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provided additional electoral expertise and resources. In addition to existing operational and management support, specialist staff were deployed to cover issues including election results management, information technology, database management, field coordination, electoral procedures and training, observer coordination, public outreach and electoral complaints. UNAMI supported the Commission in discussions with the two electoral technology suppliers to address issues relating to the complementarity of the supplied devices and witnessed five simulation exercises undertaken by the Commission and the vendors. UNAMI also submitted written advisories to the Commission, including on the participation of internally displaced persons, election technologies and expectation management during the results announcement.

36. UNAMI facilitated the signature by some 30 parties of the Electoral Charter of Honour and then convened a weekly follow-up committee in Baghdad, throughout the electoral campaign and into the post-election period, to address campaigning violations and ensure adherence to the Charter. The Charter served as a useful convening mechanism for political parties to discuss the electoral process collectively, with most of the political leaders calling upon their candidates to respect its provisions. At the request of Kurdish political parties, UNAMI established a similar charter and follow-up committee in Erbil for them.

37. On election day, UNAMI and the United Nations country team deployed 26 teams of electoral watchers who visited more than 200 polling locations, including regular polling stations and stations for internally displaced persons in Baghdad, Basrah, Kirkuk, Erbil, Dahuk and Sulaymaniyah Governorates. They provided extensive and regular updates that were fed into the reporting of the ad hoc United Nations reporting unit.

C. Human rights and rule of law developments and activities

38. Armed conflict, terrorism and acts of violence continued to take a heavy toll on civilians. Civilian casualties increased in May, compared with April, with 95 civilians killed and 163 wounded, owing largely to two ISIL mass-casualty suicide bombings, one carried out by a 9-year-old child and the other by a juvenile aged between 15 and 16 years. This was, nonetheless, a far lower number than in the same month in 2017. In the first half of June, at least 31 civilians were killed and 92 wounded. Of these, 2 were killed and 50 wounded when improvised explosive devices detonated in civilian populated areas in Kirkuk city centre and in Khalis district centre, in Diyala Governorate. The overall trend since October 2017, of relatively low civilian casualties, nevertheless continues, reflecting a reduction in hostilities between the Iraqi security forces and ISIL.

39. The leading cause of civilian casualties remains the use by ISIL of improvised explosive devices, a particular threat to civilians in Baghdad, Diyala, Ninawa, Kirkuk and Anbar Governorates. Other tactics used by the terrorist group included targeting first responders assisting victims, killings and abductions at fake checkpoints, organized attacks on remote villages and the shelling of polling stations during the elections.

40. On 3 June, the Department of Yazidi Affairs in the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs of the Kurdistan Regional Government reported that, of the 6,417 Yazidis (3,548 female and 2,869 male) abducted by ISIL since August 2014, fewer than half had been freed or escaped. On the same day, the Department also reported that 3,117 Yazidis (1,452 female and 1,665 male) remained in ISIL captivity or were missing.

41. Iraqi courts continued to issue death sentences for terrorism-related crimes. To date in 2018, the Supreme Judicial Council has publicly announced the imposition of 41 death sentences for terrorism-related crimes, including against 24 women, 23 of whom were foreigners (17 Turks, 3 Kyrgyz, 2 Azerbaijanis and 1 German). On 16 April, the Ministry of Justice announced that 13 executions had been carried out in 2018, including 11 for terrorism-related crimes. The Government has not responded to the request by UNAMI for information on terrorism-related indictments, convictions and death penalty sentences and on where and when executions have been carried out.

42. Bodies of civilians continued to be recovered from the rubble in Mosul. On 10 May, the Prime Minister ordered the establishment of a committee to recover the

bodies. The civilian defence corps informed UNAMI that 4,160 bodies had been recovered to date.

43. Mass graves continued to be discovered in areas previously under ISIL control. On 2 April, a mass grave containing 51 bodies of Iraqi security forces personnel was discovered in Mosul. On 6 April, a mass grave containing 22 bodies of former security personnel and Independent High Electoral Commission employees was also discovered in Mosul. Both mass graves reportedly contain ISIL victims. Since June 2014, UNAMI has recorded the discovery of at least 124 mass graves, the majority of which are believed to contain ISIL victims (as reported to UNAMI, from 6,379 to 12,878 victims). UNAMI also continued to advocate the appropriate protection of mass graves in order to collect, secure and preserve evidence.

44. UNAMI continues its engagement on ISIL accountability. In preparation for the deployment of an independent investigative team, pursuant to Security Council resolution 2379 (2017), to support Iraqi efforts to hold the group accountable for its crimes committed in Iraq, UNAMI supported a mission to meet relevant counterparts and collect information in order to prepare for the establishment of the team on the ground. On 31 May, I appointed Karim Khan as the Special Adviser and Head of the Investigative Team.

45. The country task force on monitoring and reporting, co-chaired by UNAMI and the United Nations Children's Fund, verified five grave violations against children resulting in the killing of 10 boys and the maiming of 3 boys. The country task force is working towards finalizing an action plan with the Government to prevent and end the recruitment and use of children. Progress is also being made on establishing a group of friends of children and armed conflict, to enable the international community in Iraq to better address related issues in the country.

46. Information on sexual violence remains difficult to obtain as a result of stigma and fear of reprisals. Notwithstanding these difficulties, the Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Arrangements Technical Working Group on Conflict-related Sexual Violence continued its efforts to analyse trends and patterns in relation to conflict-related sexual violence with a view to enhancing responses, advocacy and accountability. UNAMI continued to hold discussions with the Government on the implementation of the joint communiqué on the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence of 2016, including in relation to accountability for sexual violence crimes. The coordination team on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) held a meeting in Baghdad on 9 May and another in Erbil on 15 and 16 May and agreed on the pillars for the second national action plan on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and finalized the report on the first plan.

47. According to the Independent High Electoral Commission, 2,009 female candidates participated in the parliamentary elections. During the campaign period, posters of female candidates were vandalized and photographs allegedly showing candidates wearing revealing clothing were posted online. Some female candidates withdrew following threats and intimidation. My Special Representative issued a statement to condemn the threats and encourage women to press ahead with their campaigns.

48. On 21 May, following several months of advocacy efforts led by the United Nations Population Fund, the Secretary-General of the Iraqi Council of Ministers, Mahdi al-Allaq, approved a proposal to amend welfare legislation to introduce a reference to shelter services for gender-based violence survivors, aimed at providing a legal basis for establishing such shelters.

49. Between 1 and 3 May, a joint Office of Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate scoping mission visited Iraq to identify

needs and priorities in the areas of developing youth skills through technical and vocational training institutes, to support efforts to prevent violent extremism, counter the financing of terrorism, develop a comprehensive national counter-terrorism strategy and counter terrorist narratives through strategic communications. The visit was conducted as a follow-up to the consultations held between the heads of the Office and the Directorate and the Iraqi authorities in early March. The scoping mission participants held meetings with United Nations country team officials and representatives of key government ministries and agencies, diplomatic missions and relevant international organizations. The Office is now preparing project concept notes for discussion with the Iraqi authorities, UNAMI and relevant United Nations country team officials.

D. Humanitarian assistance, stabilization and development

50. The humanitarian crisis in Iraq continues, despite a number of displaced families returning to their communities. By the end of May, more than 3.8 million Iraqis had returned to their area of origin, but more than 2.1 million remain displaced and require humanitarian assistance. The returns process continues to be dynamic, as new and secondary displacements are being recorded. Implementing partners of the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan, aiming to provide emergency support to 3.4 million highly vulnerable Iraqis, have reached up to 1 million (24 per cent) of those targeted between January and March with some form of humanitarian assistance. However, the Plan's funding is still low: of the $569 million required, only $253 million (45 per cent) in donor contributions had been received by June.

51. During the parliamentary elections, humanitarian partners advocated the right to vote for all Iraqi citizens, including displaced persons and returnees. Accordingly, the humanitarian community developed guidance documents in English and Arabic for humanitarian workers who were fulfilling their regular duties, as well as best practice recommendations, which were submitted to the Independent High Electoral Commission through the UNAMI Electoral Assistance Office, aiming to ensure respect for humanitarian principles. Nevertheless, more than 64 suspected election-related protection incidents were recorded by the protection cluster, which were subsequently submitted to the Commission for investigation. The continued presence of armed actors in some camps across Iraq and reports of some attacks by them on humanitarian personnel, as well as reports of sexual harassment of women and girls with perceived ties to ISIL, detention and disappearance, recruitment activities inside the camps, restrictions on freedom of movement and threats of forced return, remain a grave concern.

52. The clearance of explosive hazards in Mosul and Fallujah continued. Several suspected ISIL weapons and ammunition manufacturing facilities were also discovered in the Khatuniyah neighbourhood of Mosul. During the reconstruction of a bridge in Fallujah, two suspected explosive hazards were found, prompting the Mine Action Service of the United Nations to deploy an improvised explosive device disposal team, which removed the devices and allowed work to proceed. Some 18,742 explosive hazards have been removed from Mosul and Fallujah since the beginning of 2018, reducing the threat to returning civilians and enabling the reconstruction of infrastructure.

53. In response to the suspected explosive hazard contamination in Hawijah district, the Mine Action Service established a presence in Kirkuk. As the local police are particularly vulnerable to explosive hazard threats, an explosive hazard first responder course was provided in Kirkuk Governorate in June to mitigate the risks of explosive hazard accidents. A total of 87 police officers have been trained to date. Following efforts by the Government of Iraq, the international community and the

Service, two additional non-governmental mine action organizations were registered by the Government and will become operational once their accreditation is completed.

54. The UNDP Funding Facility for Stabilization continued to facilitate the return of displaced persons, to lay the groundwork for reconstruction and recovery and to safeguard against the resurgence of violence and extremism. More than 2,400 projects have been completed, are ongoing or are planned across liberated areas in Anbar, Ninawa, Salah al-Din, Diyala and Kirkuk Governorates. The Mosul University rehabilitation project reached an important milestone, with the opening of the women's education building, the science building and the women's dormitories.

55. The reconstruction of two major bridges in Anbar Governorate — the Palestine and Japanese highway bridges — has begun. Valued at $18 million, the project will benefit the entire governorate, encourage the return of displaced persons and improve trade and commerce, in particular between Iraq and Jordan. In Qa'im, Rawah and Anah, three towns in western Anbar Governorate liberated from ISIL in December 2017, the first stabilization projects have begun, including two electricity projects, four water treatment plants and three rubble removal projects. Approximately 41 stabilization projects have been earmarked for the first phase, with another 109 awaiting the necessary funding.

56. Following the Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq, held in February, the Prime Minister launched a national development plan covering the period 2018–2022 on 9 May, which includes priorities outlined in the Iraq reconstruction and development framework for the period 2018–2027 and the poverty reduction strategy for the period 2018–2022.

57. The United Nations system in Iraq began the process of developing a new United Nations Development Assistance Framework, covering the period 2020–2024, to align its interventions with the Government's priorities, with a focus on implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this connection, the road map has been adopted by the United Nations country team and the regional Peer Support Group; the data collection phase of the common country analysis has begun. In the interim, before the implementation of the new Framework, the United Nations country team will carry out its interventions through a short-term recovery and resilience programme for Iraq.

58. On 17 May, my Deputy Special Representative for Development and Humanitarian Affairs participated in the biweekly conference call between senior officers on reconstruction and development in Iraq. In the call, participants shared updates on reforms and plans for engaging with the new Council of Representatives on reconstruction, recovery and development and on private sector investment for the country's reconstruction. Participants exchanged views on the Iraq Reconstruction and Development Financing Facility and also reiterated the importance of establishing a Baghdad-level coordination mechanism for sharing information and building consensus among partners on reconstruction, recovery and development initiatives.

59. In line with the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 2 on zero hunger, the World Food Programme undertook a zero hunger strategic review to formulate policies, institutional changes and investments to achieve the Goal. The review was conducted by representatives of relevant government institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector, under the leadership of the Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers. The results were presented on 10 May in the presence of my Deputy Special Representative for Development and Humanitarian Affairs. Improving safety-net instruments, enhancing sustainable agricultural production, addressing poor nutrition, increasing

employment, especially among young people and women, and reforming marketing, trade and pricing policies were identified as priorities.

60. On 7 May, my Special Representative participated in the annual planning retreat of the United Nations Inter-Agency Gender Task Force in Erbil. The Task Force aims to promote women's empowerment as set out in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Sustainable Development Goals. Participants developed the Task Force's strategic priorities for the period 2018–2019 and annual workplan. My Special Representative highlighted the critical importance of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment and the need to continuously support victims of ISIL and open more spaces for women in the political and economic domains.

E. Security and operational issues

61. The United Nations in Iraq continued to implement robust security risk mitigation measures, so as to provide an adequate level of safety and security for programme delivery in a complex environment. There are 886 international and 1,798 national staff members operating from seven United Nations offices across the country. Despite significant challenges, the United Nations continues to engage in political, human rights, humanitarian and development activities in close coordination with the Government. The Department of Safety and Security intensified monitoring and reporting of security events and developments in the run-up to and during the parliamentary elections.

62. Pursuant to my letter dated 17 May 2018 addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2018/479), UNAMI continues to take forward the implementation of the recommendations of the independent, external assessment. The Mission has strengthened its regular reporting on mandated implementation, emphasizing its coordinated efforts with the United Nations country team in thematic areas including reconciliation, elections and human rights. Joint planning and reporting efforts have improved the use of thematic coordination mechanisms — such as those on reconciliation, gender and strategic communication — and the operations management team.

63. UNAMI is taking measures to identify areas within its structure for potential efficiencies, in line with the recommendations of the assessment, to be presented as appropriate to the relevant United Nations budgetary bodies. In this context, it is preparing to conduct a review of the Integrated Coordination Office for Development and Humanitarian Affairs, with UNDP and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs providing experts to participate in the assessment. The findings of the assessment and the introduction of a national United Nations Volunteers programme will be presented to the appropriate budgetary bodies.

64. The operations management team, currently chaired by UNDP, is leading and coordinating efforts to submit the requisite documents to the International Civil Service Commission for a review of the rest and recuperation cycle in all duty stations in Iraq.

65. The Department of Safety and Security will lead the second part of the assessment of the security architecture in Iraq, which is scheduled to be conducted in the third quarter of 2018. It will include further examination of facility perimeter protection and access control measures in Baghdad, Erbil and Kirkuk.

66. As requested by the Security Council, my Special Representative presented the short-term and long-term priorities and objectives of UNAMI and the United Nations country team during his briefing to the Council on 30 May and also clarified the

division of labour among United Nations entities. The priorities and objectives are intended for further discussion with the Council and the Government, with the aim of achieving alignment between the needs of the country and the activities and work of the United Nations.

67. On 14 June, the Security Council adopted resolution 2421 (2018), by which it extended the mandate of UNAMI until 31 May 2019. The Mission is authorized, inter alia, to prioritize the provision of advice, support and assistance to the Government and people of Iraq on advancing inclusive, political dialogue and national and community-level reconciliation and to further advise, support and assist the Government and the Independent High Electoral Commission on the development processes for holding elections and referendums. The Kurdistan regional parliamentary elections are scheduled for 30 September 2018, while the nationwide provincial council elections are to be held on 22 December 2018.

IV. Observations

68. The parliamentary elections constituted a significant milestone as the first since the defeat of ISIL. I applaud the patriotism and determination of all those Iraqis who participated, in particular those internally displaced persons who voted despite the difficult conditions in some areas. I also applaud the commitment and vigilance of the Iraqi security forces in ensuring a largely peaceful and orderly electoral process. I commend the Independent High Electoral Commission on its efforts to conduct an electoral process within the constitutional timeline, notwithstanding the tight deadlines and myriad organizational and technical challenges.

69. I congratulate the political parties and candidates for their participation in the elections and their contribution to fostering democracy. I encourage them to be magnanimous in electoral victory and gracious in defeat. The timely certification of the election results will pave the way for the convening of the new parliament and the formation of the next Government, in accordance with the Constitution. I urge political parties to ensure that women robustly participate in the formation process and are strongly represented in the new Government.

70. I note the concerns expressed by a number of parties regarding alleged electoral fraud, in addition to the decision by the Council of Representatives to initiate a manual recount of the ballots. The United Nations stands ready to scale up technical assistance, if requested. Most importantly, I urge all political actors and their supporters to uphold the peace and remain committed to resolving any electoral disputes through established legal channels, as stipulated in the Electoral Charter of Honour that they signed, witnessed by representatives of the United Nations, in the presence of all other party representatives.

71. The low voter turnout in the parliamentary elections sends a clear message. I urge Iraqi political leaders and representatives to draw the necessary conclusions as to the need for improved representation, justice for all, democratic accountability and good governance. I call upon the political establishment to ensure the swift formation of a truly national Government that reflects the will and addresses the concerns of the people.

72. I am encouraged by the level of communication between Baghdad and Erbil during the government formation process and call upon both sides to maintain the momentum and tackle other outstanding issues through dialogue. My Special Representative and his colleagues in UNAMI stand ready to support and facilitate discussions, if requested by both sides.

73. The Government continued to reach out to neighbouring countries and other international partners to strengthen bilateral relations, combat terrorism and violent extremism and advance mutual political, economic and security interests. I am encouraged that more than 1,085 electoral observers from the region and other countries came to assist in observing the elections. This is a clear indication of the international community's commitment to helping the Government and people of Iraq to rebuild their nation. I strongly encourage a continued focus on stabilization and reconstruction and call upon the international community to support Iraqi efforts to ensure better governance and service delivery.

74. Even though civilian casualties in April were the lowest since UNAMI began publicly reporting such casualties in Iraq in 2012, ISIL remnants continue to kill and wound civilians in several governorates, including Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninawa and Salah al-Din. I encourage the Government to continue its efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism, in accordance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

75. Iraqi women and children with perceived ties to ISIL experience serious protection concerns in camps, including denial of assistance, restrictions on freedom of movement, sexual harassment, rape and sexual exploitation. I condemn in the strongest terms all violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including any form of sexual exploitation and abuse of displaced persons and refugees. The United Nations will continue to raise awareness and undertake capacity-building, reporting, referral and follow-up in relation to these issues.

76. I strongly urge the Government to continue to ensure the conditions necessary for the voluntary, safe and dignified return of the remaining displaced persons and to redouble its efforts to respect the civilian and humanitarian character of camps, in line with the Prime Minister's directive. I also call upon Member States to provide timely support to humanitarian response and stabilization efforts. In this critical period, I urge Member States to provide the immediate humanitarian support required by the displaced population, help with the stabilization of the liberated areas and support projects aimed at returning resilience to the social fabric of such communities.

77. Lastly, I should like to welcome Marta Ruedas, who has taken up her functions as my Deputy Special Representative for Development and Humanitarian Affairs and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator. I should also like to express my sincere appreciation to my Special Representative, Ján Kubiš, and the staff of the United Nations in Iraq for their unwavering and courageous efforts to implement the Organization's mandate under challenging circumstances.